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SUBJECT: DARFUR FORUM AIRS GRIPEs ABOUT DPA

¶1. (U) Summary: Members of the Darfur Forum conveyed their dissatisfaction with the DPA to S/CRS team, focusing largely on the issues of compensation and security, but offered few concrete suggestions on how to improve the document or other support solutions. End summary.

DARFUR FORUM'S FOCUS

¶2. (U) ARC officers met July 5 with members of the Darfur Forum, a loose umbrella organization established in 2003 to "find a solution to the Darfur crisis." Acting Chairman Khalil Adam Abdelkarim led the discussion, which also included acting Secretary Mohammed Al Nour Abbakar, Mohammed Nour Tagal (lawyer) and Zahra Mineim (present at the Abuja talks). Abdelkarim briefly explained that the Forum pursued its goals by organizing dialogues and conferences within Sudan and abroad to bring attention and solutions to the crisis in Darfur. He claimed that the Forum represented all the stakeholders and factions in Darfur and sides neither with the GNU nor the rebel movements. He added that his organization, with its headquarters in Khartoum, also has an executive body in each Darfur state. Abdelkarim explained that the Forum has five core tenets: First, Darfur must be a unified state retaining the 1956 boundaries; second, Darfur is entitled to equitable wealth and power sharing within the country; third, all janjawid must be disarmed; fourth, a vice presidential office should be established at the national level and be filled by a Darfuri; fifth, the Forum is open to discussion with all parties.

NO SUPPORT FOR THE DPA

¶3. (U) Abdelkarim, who speaks English well, opined that roughly eighty percent of Darfur's population is not supportive of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). In particular, he stressed that Darfurians were skeptical of the government's claims that it would pay compensation and noted that his group would like to see specific guarantees of "individual compensation." He argued that it was impossible for average Darfurians who had lost land, family members and livestock to return to their villages and start life again without first receiving compensation - a prospect, he contended, that was not sufficiently articulated in the DPA. He added that the \$30 million GNU compensation fund in the DPA was a pittance. Embassy field officers pushed back, noting the specific processes and mechanisms put in place by the DPA to provide reconstruction and development funding, as well as the possibility of additional GNU investment into the compensation fund.

¶4. (U) On security, several members of the Forum expressed their doubts about janjaweed disarmament and the government's willingness to carry out its related obligations. Especially troubling, they noted, was the janjaweed's incorporation into the GNU police and security services and the fact that the DPA did not address a

justice process to deal with janjaweed crimes. (Note: A number of the group's assertions on security were factually incorrect - for example, that the timelines associated with the security mechanisms were not set in stone, but could be modified based on conditionality of progress with janjaweed disarmament. The S/CRS team sought to better inform the group and refute the inaccuracies of their arguments concerning security mechanisms outlined in the DPA text. End note.)

15. (U) The S/CRS team repeatedly stressed that the DPA, while not re-negotiable, is a compromise document representing a starting point rather than the final answer to Darfur's problems. The field officers pointed out that mechanisms such as the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) could provide a venue to work out more specific modalities to address perceived shortcomings in the agreement. Abdelkarim remarked that since one DDDC objective was to affirm support for the DPA, it would not even be possible to have the DDDC, based on its lack of popular support. He added that his impression of the DDDC was a tool to discuss tribal reconciliation, not to deal with the most important issues of security, wealth and power sharing, and justice.

16. (U) Pressed to provide not only their critiques of the DPA but also some ideas on solutions, Abdelkarim and his colleagues finally suggested creating a "supplementary document" that would clearly confirm Darfur's 1956 borders as a region, ensure neutralization of the janjaweed, guarantee individual compensation, and place executive power within Darfur. Abdelkarim commented that "without additional documents and processes, the DPA will not work." Finally, he questioned the inherent utility of opening an African Union-led DPA Implementation Office when the agreement had such scant popular buy-in.

COMMENT

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17. (U) While all of the Darfur Forum representatives were clearly articulate and intelligent, it was surprising that they conveyed such gross misperceptions of key provisions of the DPA. Part of their outlook was colored by a stated distrust of the GNU to fulfill any of its obligations, though it appears too that they simply want more - more power, more guarantees of compensation, more action - than was provided in the DPA. While all of the Darfur Forum representatives live in El Fasher, it is unclear how well connected they are to the broader civil society in Darfur and whether their views are consistent with those of members in Khartoum.

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